

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHVB #0015 0091420
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 091420Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 0236
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 3478
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8908

C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000015

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/08/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIAN CONCERNS OVER NATO RATIFICATION PROCESS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert A. Bradtke, for reasons 1.4(b) & (d).

¶1. (C) In a January 9 meeting with the Ambassador, Ministry of Foreign Affairs State Secretary Matkovic raised Croatian concerns over the pace of progress towards ratifying Croatian and Albanian accession to NATO. Noting that she had been instructed by Prime Minister Sanader to meet with the Ambassador, Matkovic said that the Croatians had been told that NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer wanted the process completed by the end of February. This, according to the SYG's staff, would allow for Croatian and Albanian participation as full members in preparations for the April 3-4 NATO Summit, but it also meant that the practical deadline to complete the ratification process was less than two months away.

¶2. (C) While being assured by the SYG's staff that everything was "under control," Croatia was concerned about Greece and, to a lesser extent, Slovenia. In the case of Slovenia, Matkovic said, the Croatians accepted Slovene Prime Minister Pahor's public statements that Slovenia would proceed with ratification in time for the Summit. Nevertheless, given Croatian experience with Slovenia in its EU accession talks, Croatia would be watching closely developments in Slovenia.

¶3. (C) Regarding Greece, Matkovic suggested, without further explanation, that Greece might seek some last-minute concession from Croatia on its use of the word "Macedonian," in Croatia's Constitutional law on National Minorities. The Prime Minister was sufficiently concerned that he intended to call Greek Prime Minister Karamanlis next week to urge rapid and unconditional ratification by Greece. On behalf of the Prime Minister, Matkovic asked for U.S. assistance in helping to ensure Greek ratification as soon as possible.

¶4. (C) Matkovic also raised the issue of whether the U.S. intended to host an event in Washington to mark the completion of the process of deposit of all the instruments of ratification. The Prime Minister, she said, recalled that the United States hosted such an event in 2005, and he hoped that the U.S. would do so again. In response, the Ambassador noted that a decision on any Washington ceremony would have to await the new Administration.

¶5. (C) Comment and Action Requested. Given the problems they have encountered in the EU accession process, and a spate of other bad news about the economy and gas supplies, it is understandable that the Croatians are anxious that the NATO ratification process go smoothly and be completed by the April Summit. We defer to USNATO, Embassy Athens, and Washington on the merits and tactics of approaching the Greeks, but from our perspective, we would like to be responsive to the Prime Minister's request for help.
BRADTKE